

I'd like to talk to you for just a few minutes tonight on a subject that I think is pretty important. All of you that the Scout Motto is: Be Prepared. Most of your Scout training has been in the area of 'Being Prepared for Life.' But it also must carry the idea of 'Being Prepared for Death.'

Now it takes very special young men to be far-sighted enough to realize that he can't live forever; that there is a greater being than himself in existence; to realize that there are moral standards that must be stood up for, and that he must do his very best to make the world a better place to live. It is only the most special people who are prepared to die. Now I don't want to be morbid or scary! But just like the big test at school, most of us want to put off thinking about it until our time is almost up. But the best way to prepare for a test is to begin early. Then you can really enjoy life. And the test, which held so many uncertainties, turns out to be a cinch if you are prepared.

There's a program in Scouting that is designed to give you some of this kind of preparation. It is the God and Country program. In my heart I place my God and Country award, which you see here, beside my Eagle in importance. To me, a complete Scout is one who attains both, and by doing so, prepares his heart and soul as well as his body. A Scout is not just someone who is strong physically and who can apply first aid. A Scout, above all, is someone who, as Abraham Lincoln once said, finds out where his feet should be and plants them there firmly. In other words, he believes in standing up for what is right, out of reverence for God and man.

The God and Country Program is made up of three basic units: for Cubs it is entitled, 'God and Family'; for Scouts, 'God and Church'; and for Explorers, 'God and Life'. The entire program is one which can promote your spiritual growth if it is taken seriously and used properly. If you can only have a part in the Scout program, though, it can still be of tremendous value to you.

The program is designed to fit in with the beliefs of the group that you worship with, and uses your minister, youth director, or someone else that you know to guide and counsel you. There are manuals that can be ordered at a very small cost which can be used to serve as the basis for your own particular plan of action in working toward this award.

Anything worth having or achieving takes a little time and effort, and so it is with the God and Country Award. But it is something that can be planned around Scout activities, or baseball, or anything else that might threaten to stand in your way.

It seems that in any group the best in that group emerge to accept the greatest challenges. I don't mean the best-behaved necessarily, but those who have real character inside them. I hope that each of you will want to be a part of this program. It may even take a little courage for you, if you have some 'friends' who might laugh at you for being 'religious'. But I hope that you will have the strength to at least find out what it is all about before you reject it.